

# **Sam Sharpe and the Quest for Liberation: Context, Theology and Legacy for Today**

**Regent's Park College, University of Oxford  
April 13-16, 2010**

A collaboration between the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Jamaica Baptist Union, and BMS World Mission

## **The Sam Sharpe Story**

The Conference takes as its centre-piece the story of Sam Sharpe, the Baptist deacon and enslaved person who played an important role in the 'Great Jamaican Slave Revolt' of 1831. One of the leaders of a group of enslaved persons who took part in a 'sit-down strike' against slavery, he was executed together with more than 500 others. Nevertheless, their revolt is recognized by historians and theologians as having a powerful influence on the process leading to the abolition of slavery, and Sam Sharpe is honoured as a National Hero in Jamaica. The story is of a Baptist Christian whose actions were clearly motivated by his faith and by his reading of scripture; he is reported to have said, 'In reading my Bible, I found that the white man had no more right to make a slave of me than I have to make a slave of the white man.' He remains a witness to the principle of 'liberation from below': that is, true liberation comes when those who are oppressed or marginalized participate in making their own freedom and justice, rather than simply having it granted to them by those who have power and authority. This is what the Conference identifies as the 'legacy' of Sam Sharpe today.

## **The Conference**

The conference aims to explore this story with regard to its

- **Context:** making a scholarly examination of the characters, events and social institutions of the time
- **Theology:** offering a theological reflection on the enslaved revolt, as a contribution to liberation theology
- **Legacy:** asking what light the story might shed on present-day concerns of oppressed or minority groups, and exploring its global impact.  
In particular, the conference will explore the relevance of the Sam Sharpe story for the West African experience of slavery. It will also offer a theological framework for the process among UK Baptist churches ('the Journey') which has followed the apology for slavery by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and will draw upon the experience of churches of both the Caribbean and the African diasporas in the UK and the USA.

## **Book Launch**

The conference marks the publication of a book centred on Sam Sharpe, called *Burning For Freedom: A Theology of the Black Atlantic Struggle For Liberation* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2010) by Delroy A. Reid-Salmon, Research Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College

## **Invited Speakers include:**

Dr. Cawley Bolt (Jamaica Baptist Union)  
Dr Neville Callam (Baptist World Alliance)  
Ms Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed (London Baptist Association)  
Prof Paul Fiddes (University of Oxford)  
Prof Dwight Hopkins (University of Chicago)  
Revd Wale Hudson-Roberts (Baptist Union of Great Britain)  
Dr David Muir (Evangelical Alliance)  
Revd Lynette Mullings (Queen's Theological Foundation, Birmingham)  
Dr Delroy Reid-Salmon (New York & Regent's Park College, Oxford)  
Prof. Horace Russell (Palmer Theological Seminary, Philadelphia)  
Revd David Shosanya (London Baptist Association)  
Dr Burchell Taylor (Kingston, Jamaica)  
Dr Mary Turner (School of Advanced Study, London University)

## **Call for papers:**

Short additional papers (no more than 25 minutes) are invited on the theme of the Conference. These may be offered in any of the three areas identified – context, theology or legacy. It is hoped that offerings will not be limited to historical studies of Sam Sharpe or the geographical area of the Caribbean, but will range widely over issues of liberation, justice and equality in different areas of the world. All proposals of papers will be peer-reviewed, and it is expected that papers given will be published in a conference volume.

### **Deadline for Submission of Papers: Friday 12 March**

To be sent to: Dr Nicholas Wood, Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture  
Regent's Park College, OX1 2LB. Email: [nicholas.wood@regents.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nicholas.wood@regents.ox.ac.uk)

### **Cost: Registration fee: £25.00**

#### **Residential Rate: £120; Non-Residential Rate: £60; Day Rate: £30 per day**

The main cost of the conference is being subsidised by generous sponsorship from the Tithe Fund of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, BMS World Mission and the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture. Accommodation will be at Regent's Park College in the centre of the beautiful city of Oxford. Some will be in shared flats and some will be in single study bed-rooms, each room has a wash-basin and bathrooms are nearby. *(N.B. BUGB Accredited Ministers may apply for an In Service Study Grant towards their costs.)*

## **Conference Registration:**

Please confirm your interest in attending the conference by **Friday 12 March**

**Contact:** Dr Louise Nelstrop,  
OCCC Project Manager & Research Fellow  
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Oxford, OX1 2LB  
Email: [louise.nelstrop@regents.ox.ac.uk](mailto:louise.nelstrop@regents.ox.ac.uk)

## Programme

**Monday 12 April**    *Overseas participants arrive*

**Tuesday 13 April**    *UK participants arrive*

11.00 Coffee & Registration

12.00 Opening Worship – Lead by Dr Nicholas Wood, Director of the Centre for Christianity & Culture, Regent’s Park College, Oxford;  
Preacher: **Dr Neville Callam**, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Session 1: **Prof. Horace Russell** (Emeritus Professor, Palmer Theological Seminary, Philadelphia): *The Sam Sharpe Rebellion – Characters and Institutions of the Time*

15.15 Tea

15.45 Session 2: **Dr Cawley Bolt** (President, Jamaica Baptist Union):  
*The Sam Sharpe Rebellion – Historical Context and Inter-faith Issues*

17.00 Short Break

17.15 Session 3: **Dr Mary Turner** (Senior Research Fellow, School of Advanced Study, London University): *Slave-worker Rebellions and the Ongoing Struggle for Social Justice*

18.30 Drinks Reception

19.00 Dinner

20.15 Book Launch: *Burning For Freedom: A Theology of the Black Atlantic Struggle For Liberation*. Reviewers: Dr Stephen Jennings, Dr Anthony Reddie, Revd Myra Blyth  
Response by the author, Dr Delroy Reid Salmon

## Wednesday 14 April

8.00 Breakfast

8.45 Prayers

9.15 Session 4: **Dr Delroy Reid-Salmon** (Grace Baptist Church, Bronx, NY & Regent’s Park College, Oxford): *A Theological Interpretation of the Sam Sharpe Rebellion*

10.30 Coffee break

11.00 Session 5: **Dr David Muir** (former Executive Director for Public Policy & Public Theology at the Evangelical Alliance): *Sam Sharpe and the West African Experience*

12.15 Short offered papers

13.15 Lunch

*Free time*

16.00 Tea

16.30 Session 6: **Revd Lynnette Mullings** (The Queens Theological Foundation, Birmingham): *The African and Caribbean experience in the UK*

17.30 Short break

17.45 Session 7: **Revd David Shosanya** (Regional Minister, London Baptist Association): *Sam Sharpe and Contextual Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

19.00 Dinner

20.15 Session 8: **Dr Burchell Taylor** (Bethel Baptist Church, Kingston Jamaica): *The legacy of Sam Sharpe today in the Caribbean: the church and the community*

### **Thursday 15 April**

8.00 Breakfast

8.45 Prayers

9.15 Session 9: **Revd Wale Hudson-Roberts** (Racial Justice Advisor, Baptist Union of Great Britain): *The legacy of Sam Sharpe today in the UK: (1) Notes on the 'Journey' after the Apology*

10.30 Coffee break

11.00 Session 10: **Ms Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed** (former Racial Justice Co-ordinator for the London Baptist Association): *The legacy of Sam Sharpe today in the UK: (2)*

12.00 Short offered papers

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Session 11: **Prof Dwight Hopkins** (University of Chicago Divinity School, USA): *The Legacy of Sam Sharpe in the USA*

15.15 Tea

15.45 Concluding Reflections: *The Significance of Sam Sharpe*

Summary of Conference and Reflections on Findings: **Professor Paul S. Fiddes** (30 mins)  
(Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford)

Responses by:

**Revd Karl Johnson:** Jamaica Baptist Union (10mins)

**Ms Pat White:** Moderator of Racial Justice Committee BUGB (10 mins)

**Revd David Kerrigan** or other BMS representative (10 mins)

A short address by the Jamaica High Commissioner (15 mins)

17.00 *Close and UK participants depart*

Friday 16 April *Overseas participants depart after breakfast*